

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Allegra Printing-Helena

#### Montana Manufacturing Extension Center

#### Growing with the Brand at Allegra

**Client Profile:**

Allegra Printing and Imaging is a full-service print shop located in Helena, Montana. The company employs 18 people.

**Situation:**

Allegra's general manager wanted to implement Lean manufacturing techniques learned at a Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, workshop. Driving these changes is the highly competitive nature of the printing industry where evolving print communication services need to be more intertwined with binding services. Allegra contacted MMEC to assist with moving jobs through the press area to binding, thereby creating a better workflow.

**Solution:**

MMEC conducted a Lean manufacturing 101 class, analyzed the existing plant layout, and started with 5S (sort, set in order, shine, standardize, sustain). Next, to help explore bindery layout improvements, MMEC's engineer drew up several quick layout possibilities, looking at major flow of materials. MMEC suggested reducing the old paper storage area and to consider adapting space where older equipment was being stored. MMEC also challenged the company to get rid of old, unused inventory. Several electronic versions of the floor plan were created, one with suggested equipment layout and moveable icons of tables and shelves. These visual tools enabled Allegra and staff to play with options for a future layout and analyse how they would function within it.

The Lean manufacturing effort resulted in flipping the press and bindery areas for better workflow and reduced material handling. Then Allegra applied "just-in-time" concepts to better manage a huge inventory and improve on the visual controls already in place. Commitment to Lean's workplace organization has resulted in a cleaner, safer work environment. The reconfiguration and inventory reduction made room for more advanced equipment, enabling Allegra to invest in a million-dollar Ryobi press. The changes have positioned the company to cultivate an underserved market that neither quick-print nor large commercial and web presses serve well.

**Results:**

- \*Reduced material handling by two-thirds.
- \* Reduced inventory.
- \* Invested in a \$1 million Ryobi press.
- \* Achieved a more competitive and profitable position.
- \* Increased employees by one-third.
- \* Anticipated growth of 10 percent in 2007.

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**Testimonial:**

"At Allegra, we think of MMEC as a partner in our growth. The local field engineer has seen us through a lot of changes through the years. We now have one-third more employees and growing every year."

Toni Broadbent, Owner